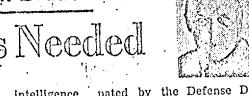


Frank Mankiewicz and Tom Braden

Intelligence Boss Is Needed



THE TROUBLE with the Intelligence service of the United States is that it has no commander. This is the point perceived by President Nixon during a recent secret White House briefing at which the President literally threw up his hands in a display of impatience at the . yast, expensive and complicated bureaucracy which had been described.

The President had asked for the briefing because of three recent and irritating intelligence failures.

The first was at Sontay, in North Vietnam, where the Army mounted a dangerous operation to recover prisoners who weren't there.

Second was the failure to learn that the North Victnamese were using the Port' fof Sihanoukville in Cambodia as a vast supply center-a fact discovered only after we barged into Cambodia thinking the supply center was somewhere else.

Third was the failure of the U.S. command in South Vietnam to forecast the speed with which the North Vietnamese could send re'nforcements into Laos, and the Army's fallure to estimate how many South Vietnamese ground troops and American airmen would be needed to do the job.

THESE failures. caused the President to ask for a clear explanation of how our intelligence system

works-and why it sometimes doesn't work. What he received was an accurate account of confusion.

The first point Mr. Nixon learned is that the \$2 billion-a-year intelligence effort is not commanded but coordinated. Richard Helms, a careful objective analyst, commands CIA but not the Defense Department's intelligence arm, which headed by Lt. Gen. Donald V. Bennett. General Bennett, in turn, doesn't really command his own forces because he is often dealing with intelligence requests from officers who outrank him and whose wishes must be regarded as orders.

compromise quently substitutes for decision in determining Defense intelligence. Department priorities. Bennett must try to satisfy an admiral who insists that developments in submarine detection must come first, a general who is, more interested in the thickness of Soviet armor, and an Air Force man who insists? on priority for new developments in the Soviet SAM. Helms must balance all this, with the importance of finding out what the Russians are putting in their ICBM bases and why.

Nobody is boss. Nominally, Helms is "coordinator" of the intelligence effort, but since most of the

intelligence for money comes through the Department of Defense, there is a natural inclination to tell the coordinator how the money should be spent.

NIXON PRESIDENT would like to bring Helms into the White House. That is usually the first thought of the boss who wants a clear ; picture of what he may have to deal with, and one man to whom he can turn to get it. But if Helms makes this λ move, he will have to give, up running the Central Intelligence Agency, where he first made his mark as a master of spy networks and into which he has brought both order and a healthy sense of restraint. (It was not Helms' wish to involve the CIA in Laos.)

With Helms in the White House, the intelligence ef- body in charge. fort would scon be domi- 0 1971, Los Anseles Times.

nated by the Defense D partment. On the basis recent performance, th would be a disaster. Form CIA Director John McCon who was also asked to mo to the White House, arguthat he would become merely a go-between wh the agency he command withered into an anach nism, much as the State I partment has withered w the advent of resident f eign affairs aides.

One compromise open the President is to give Gen. Bennett another st thus putting him on equal footing with the who are asking him to ma their priorities his own. I if this President—or a other-really wants a bet intelligence system, he eventually have to put so